

Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

Meeting 9:00 A.M. Thurston County Public Works

May 21, 2015 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Ken Estes, City of Montesano; Julie Balmelli-Powe, City of Chehalis; Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor Commissioner; Bud Blake, Thurston County Commissioner

Board Members Absent: Lionel Pinn, City of Napavine; Lonnie Willey, Town of Pe Ell; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville

Others Present: Scott Boettcher, Staff to Flood Authority; Jim Kramer, Facilitator; Kirsten Harma, Chehalis Basin Partnership; Mark Riebau, French and Associates; Jessica Hausman, Department of Ecology; Sherri Nehl, Thurston County

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from March 19, 2015
- Proposed Consultants Scope of Work
- Proposed Flood Authority Annual Work Focus and Roles
- Financial Report

1. Call to Order

Chair Raines called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Introductions

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

There were no corrections to the meeting notes and they were approved as presented.

5. Update: Outreach of Local Governments Regarding Recommended Changes to Floodplain Management

Mr. Kramer stated there have been discussions regarding changes to new development that might occur in the floodplain. New information from the new model will be used for consistency throughout the basin. The most significant are the changes in Lewis County to the flood plain maps. Before additional mapping is done there will be feedback from Centralia, Chehalis and Lewis County. The next focus will be Aberdeen City Council and Grays Harbor Commissioners discussing the mapping. Larry Karpach with Watershed Science and Engineering (WSE) will begin working on the mapping after those discussions. Mr. Averill stated information has been developed locally because the FEMA maps have not been approved.

Mr. Kramer stated FEMA came out with proposed maps in 2010 that expanded the floodway and regulations prohibit development in the floodway. Properties that are currently developed there and receive 50% damage of value cannot be reconstructed. The Lewis County Commissioners and the cities of Centralia and Chehalis are concerned that using the latest information from WSE would force those jurisdictions into using new floodway designations. FEMA stated they would encourage the use of the latest and best information.

Al Smith asked for the definition of floodway. Mr. Kramer stated the purpose of the floodway is to identify within a floodplain more hazardous places because of the strength of the current and the depth of the waterway. Hydrology models squeeze the floodplain together to where the water rises a foot and that is the floodway. This does not delineate where the dangers are. Mr. Averill stated the 2010 maps took the floodway and made it consistent with the floodplain which hugely expanded the impacted area. French is working with jurisdictions regarding the floodplains for each.

Mr. Kramer stated a lot of people look at I-5 and think that is what is happening in the entire floodplain. Few people know what the floodplain looks like in the Basin or that it will stay the way it is.

6. Update: Foundation Flood Opening

Mr. Boettcher reported that there are two contractors in the pool and the process consists of four forms. The property owner fills out a permission form; there is an estimate form; a form with the price and approval by the property owner; and finally the property owner signs off as to how the openings were done. He noted that Department of Ecology and the State Conservation Office have given a lot of support to this program.

The meeting in Bucoda regarding flood openings was well attended and there were many good questions. Eight people stated they want to have flood vents installed; there were estimates on 7 properties from one contractor and 4 from the other. The contractors have different products and estimates will be different so there will be one from each.

Mr. Boettcher stated another issue is that part of Bucoda does not have a BFE (base flood elevation) determination. In order to get a [insurance] fee reduction there must be an elevation certificate which requires a BFE. Background work is being developed to adopt a new community BFE. When that is done then everyone can participate in the program and get an elevation certificate.

7. Update: Story Maps (farm pads)

Mr. Boettcher stated story maps have been very useful in a variety of scenarios. The Conservation Commission will manage this one which includes flood data, photos, benefits of farm pads and testimonials. The farm pads are designed for four days' worth of food but generally only need 48 hours' worth since flood waters recede quickly. Mr. Smith thought the flood warning system should be included in the video so people know there will be time to get to the pads.

Mr. Boettcher stated that last September the op-ed piece talked about the state-of-the-art flood warning system. Projects have been completed in several jurisdictions that are providing localized benefits. There is a larger strategy for habitat and restoration and the Flood Authority is looking at major capital projects. The op-ed piece gave us information that we could consider. If the Flood Authority wants to continue with the story maps there are materials we can pull from.

Chair Raines thought the story maps were a great venue, as opposed to graphs and data. Mr. Kramer thought the flood warning system could be a separate story as well as part of the story map.

Mr. Averill stated the flood warning system was a pilot project and WSE has been asked to do a state-wide system. Our system only works on one water source and there are three in Lewis County. Mr. Smith stated these stories really impressed him and he suggested setting up booths at the various county fairs to show the story maps.

There was discussion about how to let the public know about the early warning system. Suggestions included sending a link to constituents to the early warning system and including the story maps; stuffers in statements that include a link to the website; contact radio stations, newspapers, libraries and schools, real estate agents and insurance companies; Emergency Management Services is a good source.

8. Update: Projects

Mr. Boettcher stated last August a request was made for local projects and the Project Committee brought back a prioritized list. The capital budget won't be known until July. The Project Committee suggested sponsors verify the dollar amounts of projects and determine if the project is still viable. They must be implemented within the funding biennium.

Mr. Averill stated the work group will determine how to split up the money that the Flood Authority receives and the Project Committee will also look at the projects. There are a number of high priority projects but can they be done during this biennium? The Flood Authority is getting [legislative] support because it has spent the money well.

Mr. Kramer stated there is a lull in the legislature right now and perhaps the story map should be shown to them. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated if the Flood Authority gets more money she would like to see the Dillenbaugh Creek done. Mr. Kramer stated the sponsors need to look at the reality of a project. At the July meeting the Project Committee could look at the list again to see where we are and what has passed in the legislature.

Ms. Hoder stated she would like to bring Aberdeen's public works director to the July meeting. She stated Aberdeen is shovel-ready for a dike.

9. Update: 2015 Legislation

Mr. Kramer stated both the Senate and the House has \$50 million with essentially the same language in both budgets. There are only parts of the budget that both have agreed upon. It is likely the budget will pass. Mr. Averill stated one area that is not the same is for levees up north that were cut out. That could cause some friction.

Mr. Kramer stated there could be another special session and it could go to June 30 before a decision is made. The Senate Transportation Bill had \$79 million in addition to the \$50 million for the work in Chehalis. There was a major amount of money that would have gone to Chehalis. There has been a lot of discussion that would create \$3 billion for water infrastructure; it could be passed outright or it could go to a vote of the people. There has been a lot of discussion about the needs of the Basin and we have powerful champions in the legislature for the Flood Authority's efforts.

Commissioner Fund stated the Washington State Association of Counties talked about the bill. We want it to pass but we are not thrilled about the assessment on the parcels.

Mr. Smith asked for clarification on the water bill. Commission Fund stated it is for flooding, water supply/drought/storm water and waste water. The folks who put the bill together want something in it for everyone. Mr. Kramer stated it would be a 10-year bond for assessment and it would be voted on by the people.

Mr. Boettcher stated the money for the Flood Authority would go to OFM and RCO would be the fiscal agent. This will cost 1% of our budget. Lewis County will remain as fiscal agent for local projects.

10. Update: New Stream Gages Proposed for Basin

This topic was postponed while waiting for DOE representatives.

11. Decision: Work Plan for next biennium and Consultants' Scope of Work

Mr. Boettcher summarized the work plan, which was similar to the past two years, and the scope of work for Mr. Kramer and Mr. Boettcher for the next biennium. Mr. Boettcher's contract now allows for a small expense as he paid for the County fairs last year out of pocket.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated things have greatly improved since Mr. Boettcher and Mr. Kramer came on board. It seems like a lot of money but it is money well spent. Mr. Kramer stated thanks to everyone the facilitation is a lot less for him and his money has gone down because of that.

Mr. Averill made a motion to approve the contracts. There were thumbs up all around.

12. Financial Report

There were no questions.

13. Public Comment

Mr. Smith stated the Flood Authority is doing a wonderful job. Without the expertise of the gate keep organization we would not be where we are now in mitigating the flood situation.

Bob Amrine asked what is happening with the relationship with the Tribes. Mr. Kramer stated two Tribes have interest: the Chehalis Tribe has a new chairman who will be a strong contributor over the next year. He is interested in continuing the Basin strategy and getting up to speed. A tour of dams is being considered in the Chehalis Basin.

The Quinault Tribe has exchanged letters with the Governor's office to initiate a government-to-government relationship in the Chehalis Basin. They want to participate but are not interested in being a stakeholder; they would rather communicate with the Governor's office. The Flood Authority is encouraging the Governor's office to use the work group to manage the government to government relationship. The QIN staff has been invited to technical workshops and they have participated but there is a lack in the policy workshops. The QIN and the Chehalis Tribe are supportive of the more formal processes.

Mr. Amrine stated EIS money will be available in July; no work will start until next summer. Mr. Kramer stated he was hopeful there would be contracts after the July meeting.

Ms. Kirsten Harma introduced herself and explained her background. She is lead for the Chehalis Basin Partnership.

14. Reports

a. Chair's Report

There was no report from the Chair.

b. Member Reports

Commissioner Fund reported that Lionel Pinn is in Arkansas; Lonnie Willey was at a FEMA meeting.

Cosmopolis – Mr. Chestnut stated the Mill Creek Project has been submitted. After initial review the status has been changed from individual to nationwide which will compress the waiting period to six months.

Centralia – Mr. Averill stated a main cable was cut while work was being done on the Mellen St project which impacted everything. Centralia has an agreement with the Chehalis Tribe on the China Creek project which will allow more ecological restoration.

Montesano – Mr. Estes reported on the Mary's River project. There were setbacks with old logs needing to be dug out. The city was told that no WDFW permit was needed for the wastewater treatment plant since no work was being done in the water. That turned out to be incorrect. There is now WDFW control over 100' within a waterway. Leftover money is going back to the Flood Authority. Mr. Estes would like to host the July meeting.

c. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

d. State Team Report

Ms. Hausman stated the Department of Ecology would be taking the lead on the programmatic EIS.

10. Update: Stream Gages

Mr. Boettcher quickly went through the PowerPoint in DOE's absence. DOE has funding to put more gages in the basin which were shown on a map. Mostly these will be in tributaries that do not have stream flow. Ms. Hausman thought they would be digital gages; they will be plugged in to the flood warning system.

15. Confirm next regular meeting

The next meeting will be a telephone meeting on June 18. In July the meeting will be in Montesano.

The meeting adjourned at 11:08.